

# OBSERVATIONS

ON

A LATE PAMPHLET BY MR STONE, ON THE  
PHRENOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF  
BURKE, HARE, &c.

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“ Quid dicit vulgus ? ”  
Ut semper sequitur fortunam et odit damnatos.

JUVENAL.

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MDCCCXXIX.



## OBSERVATIONS.

A PAMPHLET has lately appeared from the pen of Mr STONE, directed against Phrenology, written with much elegance, and more arrogance, and distinguished from other productions on the same side of the question by a greater recklessness of assertion, and a more than common ignorance of the point at issue.

We are willing to bestow on Mr STONE'S Pamphlet all the praise which is its due. Its style is plausible, fluent, and correct; but the substance of the work is as destitute of value as its exterior is full of promise.

“ Desinit in piscem mulier formosa superne.” HOR.

The flimsy sophistry which pervades the whole

would render it unworthy of an answer, were it not that bold and confident statements, if suffered to go forth uncontradicted, pass current with a vast majority of readers. The number of those who undergo the fatigue of judging for themselves is very small; and, in the present case, Mr STONE'S paper has been greedily received by a numerous body of men, who, anxious to oppose, and unwilling to examine, the grounds on which Phrenology reposes, devour with undistinguishing avidity every author who saves them from the labour of thinking for themselves, and furnishes them with ready made materials of argument.

For ourselves, we have read Mr STONE'S paper with the most flattering attention, and we assert that it is marked, *1st*, By a profound ignorance of the principles and the practice of Phrenology; *2d*, By an equal ignorance of the fundamental principles of the human mind, and the simplest laws of metaphysical analysis; and, *3d*, By an utter distaste and incapacity for fair and candid reasoning.

I. We are certainly entitled to require from every polemical writer, that he be intimately acquainted with the principles and the doctrines he attacks. In this point Mr STONE is grievously deficient. The Phrenology against which he argues, and over the fall of which he sings so many premature pæans of triumphant zeal, is no more the Phrenology of Drs GALL and SPURZHEIM than is Mahometanism the doctrine of the Gospel. Mr STONE has found it easier to overthrow an adversary of his own creation, than the one he professes to attack. He has filled his pamphlet with measurements of various Crania, which, for the purpose of overthrowing Phrenology, are utterly valueless, inasmuch as they afford us no more knowledge of the actual or relative size of an organ, than the height of a body does of its solid contents. If Mr STONE will take the trouble to look into Dr SPURZHEIM'S Physiognomical System, he will find that the peripheral expansion of an organ is of as much, and even of more, consequence in determining its size, than its length from the medulla oblongata. This principle is stated and restated times innumera-

ble in every official work upon the subject, and yet Mr STONE overlooks it in every calculation. In page 44, he states the "boundaries of each organ to be purely ideal." We are fully aware that an unexperienced eye like Mr STONE'S may be unable to detect them; but a practised and expert Phrenologist knows that each organ has its peculiar shape, and by this is enabled to judge its exact limit.

But Mr STONE'S laborious measurements are worthless on another account. He either *was* ignorant, or he affected to be ignorant, that one of the first principles of phrenological investigation laid down in almost every work upon the subject, is, that the size of the same organ in different heads is no criterion of its influence on the character. It is only by comparing a head with *itself* that you can discover what organs are preponderant and what defective. And we may tell Mr STONE, that a practical knowledge of Phrenology, sufficiently extensive to discern with accuracy the degree of preponderance or deficiency of each separate organ, is not to be acquired in a

day; and that, to be a practical Phrenologist, something more is requisite than a pair of callipers and a two-foot rule. Let him attend some experienced practitioner, Dr SPURZHIEM for example, during his examination of a prison or a school, and if he can detect any incongruity between Dr SPURZHIEM'S predictions and the actual character of his subjects, it will be time enough for the public to attend to his assertions.

II. We affirm, that Mr STONE'S paper is distinguished by a profound ignorance of the fundamental principles of the human mind, and of the simplest laws of metaphysical analysis. Mr STONE seems to imagine that in all murderers it is the organ of Destructiveness which prompts to the commission of the crime; whereas we can assure him, that nine out of ten murders are incited by the organs of Acquisitiveness, of Pride, of Combativeness; nay, in one interesting case mentioned by Dr GALL, the excessive action of the organ of Philoprogenitiveness prompted a mother to destroy her infant, to save it from the tortures of a lingering death by starvation. In

all cases of murder we must first inquire what passion or propensity led to the commission of the crime, and, if the corresponding organ is not preponderant on the head of the animal, or in a state of disease at the time, we give up Phrenology. Not long since, for example, I was shewn the head of a man who had murdered his father for L. 20 ; I looked not for the organ of Destructiveness, but for that of Acquisitiveness, and if I had found that small, and Benevolence and Adhesiveness large, I should have concluded that Phrenology was founded in error.

It is not from a single organ that we can judge of any man's character, still less of his actions. One man, with a small organ of Acquisitiveness, may be more given to theft, than another with a much larger organ, if the latter have Conscientiousness and Benevolence large, and the former have these organs small. Until, therefore, we can invent callipers and scales to take the guess and dimensions of temptation, to measure the height and depth of moral weakness, and to calculate with geometrical precision the influence of



temperament, and the force of circumstances,—none but the arrogant and the presumptuous will pretend to predict the results of any organ. Man may know the passions and propensities of his fellows;—it is the prerogative for a higher power to foretell the actions to which those propensities will lead.

Mr STONE thinks it sufficient to subvert Phrenology to find the organ of Benevolence large in a murderer,—whereas, in many cases, it would be subversive of the science were it otherwise. And this leads us to one of the strongholds of Phrenology. Every observer of human nature, in its ever-varying phases, must have been surprised and confounded by the inconsistent and anomalous qualities which present themselves in the same character, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes in the order of succession. The Athenian people presented a remarkable instance of these of opposite, and, as Mr STONE imagines, incompatible features. PLINY (Hist. xxxv.) speaks of them as “*inexorabilem, clementem, misericordem, excelsum, gloriosum, humilem, fus-*

cem, fugacemque, *et omnia pariter.*” But, without going so far into antiquity for the establishment of so obvious a fact, every one is aware that a man may be savage and cruel at one time, mild and benevolent at another,—to-day impatient and pugnacious, to-morrow peaceable and philosophical;—and we could point out many, who, calm and placid on all other occasions, become fiery and ferocious the instant that gunpowder-word Phrenology is mentioned. How are these inconsistencies to be explained? “The common supposition of the unity of mind explains them about as well as the indivisibility of the solar ray explains the seven colours of the prismatic spectrum. Phrenology clears up the difficulty at once, by telling us that the organs of Benevolence and Destructiveness, both powerful, are successively called into action, and sway the sceptre of the mind in turn. We will draw one instance in illustration from Mr STONE’S pamphlet. “Burke was always very ready to give away his money, and free with it among those of his companions who were poorer than himself.” Here we see the operation of the large organ of Benevolence, which puzzles Mr STONE so much.

“ On one occasion, a student having purchased and paid him for the extremity of a subject, Burke received the price of the body to the full amount, on which he immediately sought the student, and, of his own accord, refunded him the money.” This is obviously a large organ of Conscientiousness, which Mr S. asserts Burke to have possessed ;—and I should be curious to know how he would have accounted for this action had that organ been deficient. We all know through what strange loopholes the human mind continues to escape, when it wishes to avoid a disagreeable conclusion from an admitted proposition,—but it affords the public no high idea of the good faith of Mr STONE, that he has suppressed the obvious deduction arising from the two facts which have been quoted from his pamphlet.

III. Lastly, we assert that Mr STONE’S pamphlet is marked by an utter incapacity for fair and candid reasoning,—nor is he the only opponent of Phrenology to whom this assertion will apply. To us it has often appeared inexplicable

that men, who on all other subjects are candid, rational, and sane, the moment they come in sight of Phrenology, are scared out of reason, and justice, and moderation; and that, as the waxen wings of Icarus were melted as he approached the sun, so philosophers lose every quality which entitled them to the name, the moment they come in contact with the dazzling brightness of unexpected truth. Of Mr STONE's want of fairness and candour, we have perhaps already adduced sufficient instances; but were it otherwise, I find in the last page of his paper, a sentence enough of itself to stamp his character as a writer willing, when he can, to misrepresent, and to mislead. "The Phrenologists" (says he) "maintain that a large organ of Veneration is at one time the characteristic configuration of the head of a saint,—at another equally essential to that of the most notorious and professed infidel," viz. VOLTAIRE. We *do* maintain that it is the same principle or sentiment of our nature which led the Israelites to worship the God of Abraham, and to bow down before the Golden Calf, which led the savage Mexicans to venerate Cortez as a

deity, and which inspired VOLTAIRE with that blind and contemptible reverence for exalted rank, which he could not pay to a Being whose existence he denied. Where is the incongruity of this? Is it not the same sentiment of benevolence which inspires compassion for the sufferings of the human and the brute creation? and may it not also be the same sentiment, under a different direction, which teaches us to respect a Monarch and a God?

We have said enough of Mr STONE'S paper, though we have not laid open half its weak points. The greater part of his conclusions and his insinuations are so frivolous and puerile, that it is an abuse of the privilege of reasoning to reply to them. To argue against the string of manifest absurdities and contradictions, which pervade the whole, is like beating the air with a club, and cutting down gnats with a scymitar. It is strength wasted and time misemployed.

A work on Phrenology from the pen of Sir WILLIAM HAMILTON is announced by Mr

STONE as forthcoming. We wait for it with interest and anxiety. His high talents, extensive acquirements, and profound scientific knowledge, render him a formidable antagonist, and Phrenologists are now expecting his attack in silence.

*Conticuere omnes, intentique ora tenebant.—VIRG.*



